



[Karl Marx, 1818 - 1883](#)

## Bourgeois and Proletarians

Bourgeois and Proletarians is the first of the three major parts of the [Communist Manifesto](#), commissioned by the Communist League, written in London by Karl Marx, at the age of 29, with the help of his then 27-year-old friend Frederick Engels, and published in January, 1848.

Also included is the final page of the Manifesto, called “Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Existing Opposition Parties.”

Marx and Engels were under pressure from the Communist League to get this job done quickly. The brief was as difficult as it could be: to produce a short, emphatic, unambiguous, motivational description of historic processes, and to announce a credible determination to change the world under the leadership of the most exploited class of people, the working

class, also known as the proletariat.

Marx and Engels were convinced that the new masters, the capitalists, also known as burghers, or burgesses, or bourgeoisie, that had grown up in the towns under feudal rule, were sooner or later going to be overthrown by the proletariat that the bourgeoisie had brought into existence.

Marx fell behind the agreed deadline, but came through with a magnificent text just a few weeks before the February, 1848 events in Paris that brought the proletariat on to the stage of history to an extent that had not previously been seen in the world.

The timing was great, and the text turned out to be classic to the extent that every line of it is memorable, especially in this first part. It is so rich and so compressed as to be saturated with meaning, and hence practically impossible to summarise. Therefore let us simply quote some of the most extraordinary sentences, so as to encourage you to read the document, not once but many times:

*The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.*

*Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other - bourgeoisie and proletariat.*

*The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.*

*All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and*

*venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify.*

*All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real condition of life and his relations with his kind.*

The final words of the Manifesto are as follows:

*In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things.*

*In all these movements, they bring to the front, as the leading question in each, the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time.*

*Finally, they labour everywhere for the union and agreement of the democratic parties of all countries.*

*The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.*

***WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!***

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Communist Manifesto, Bourgeois and Proletarians, Marx and Engels](#).
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